

FREDERICK ALBERT COOK

Discoverer of The North Pole

April 21, 1908

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

April 21, 1908 — April 21, 1983

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DR. FREDERICK A. COOK IN 1907 SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE ON HIS
LAST ARCTIC EXPEDITION (1907-1909) WHICH RESULTED IN HIS DISCOVERY OF
THE NORTH POLE.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM "RETURN FROM THE POLE" BY DR. FREDERICK A. COOK,
PELLEGRINI & CUDAHY, 1951. BY PERMISSION OF DR. COOK'S
GRANDDAUGHTER, JANET VETTER.

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Frederick Albert Cook
Discoverer of the North Pole

I

When Dr. Frederick A. Cook, the highly esteemed and greatly respected Polar explorer, left American shores July 3, 1907, in quest of the North Pole, his outstanding record and varied experience in both Polar regions clearly revealed him to possess the extraordinary ability, courage, and temperament necessary to enable him to reach that remote and until then impregnable point on the globe.

Dr. Cook had served his novitiate as an explorer under Robert Edwin Peary as surgeon and ethnologist on the latter's First North Greenland Expedition (1891-1892). His exemplary service then had elicited very favorable comment from Peary.

Later, he had served as surgeon and ethnologist on the Belgian Antarctic Expedition, the first expedition to endure a winter in the Antarctic with its bitter cold and perpetual darkness (1897-1899). His magnificent ingenuity and imperturbability in the face of impending disaster had saved the members of that expedition from perishing in the South Polar wastes and his understanding of Polar conditions had contributed immeasurably to the outstanding record of accomplishment which the "Belgica" expedition compiled. Indeed, he had been knighted by the King of the Belgians and had been awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of Belgium in recognition of his services in the Antarctic.

Roald Amundsen, the renowned Polar explorer and discoverer of the South Pole, who had served with Dr. Cook on the "Belgica" expedition and knew him intimately as an explorer and as a man, characterized Dr. Cook as a genius in exploration and called him "...the finest traveler I ever saw." In his book, *The South Pole*, published in 1912, Amundsen, in recalling the earlier Belgian expedition, commented that Dr. Cook became indispensable to the expedition and observed that he mastered wonderfully the great burden of responsibility which fell upon his shoulders. High praise indeed from an explorer universally regarded as one of the greatest figures in the history of Polar exploration.

In 1901, he had returned to the Arctic with the Peary Relief Expedition, whose purpose was to locate Peary, who was believed to be lost, and bring him aid and succour. Dr. Cook gave up his own plans for the Summer of 1901, and answering the pleas of Herbert Bridgeman, Secretary of the Peary Arctic Club, joined the expedition because of its humanitarian goal. As it happened, Peary was not lost but was ill aboard his ship, the "Windward," in Smith Sound. Cook gave him a thorough physical examination, found him a victim of pernicious anemia, and urged his immediate return to the United States, advice which Peary declined to follow.

Subsequently, in 1903, Dr. Cook had explored Mt. McKinley in sub-Arctic Alaska, the highest peak in North America, climbing to a point on the western side of the mountain 11,000 feet in elevation, the record for the time, and making a complete circumnavigation of the giant uplift. In 1906, he had returned to Mt. McKinley, making his second attempt to reach the top, and in September of that year had made the first ascent of the mountain. In December, 1906, Dr. Cook and Robert Edwin Peary were guests of honor at the Annual Dinner of the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., Cook being accorded this tribute for his climb of Mt. McKinley and Peary for his Arctic Expedition of 1905-1906. Thus, at the threshold of his last Arctic expedition in 1907, his background, his experience and his extraordinary ability, acknowledged on all sides, superbly equipped him for a successful assault on the North Pole.

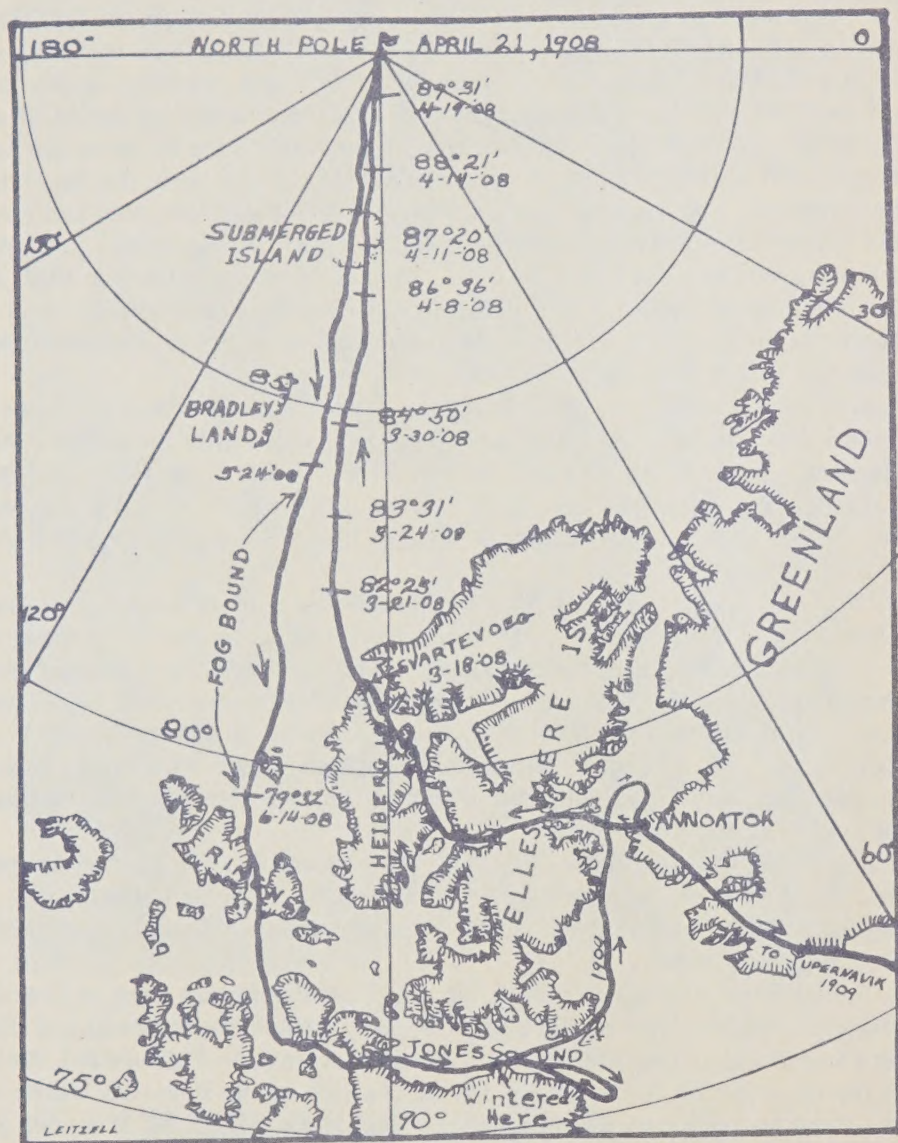
Upon arriving in northern Greenland in August 1907, Dr. Cook established his base at Annoatok and spent the winter gathering supplies of meat and furs to supplement the provisions brought from the United States, obtaining Eskimo dogs to draw his sledges, enlisting Eskimos for the actual push to the Pole, and building sturdy, streamlined sledges specially designed by his brother, Theodore Cook, and himself.

At the first light of the Arctic dawn, February 19, 1908, Dr. Cook left the western coast of Greenland leading an expedition consisting of 11 men driving 11 sledges drawn by 103 dogs. The party crossed Smith Sound and Ellesmere Island, sledged up Eureka Sound and Nansen Sound and arrived March 17 at Cape Svartevoeg (now Stallworthy), the northernmost peninsula of Axel Heiberg Island on the shore of the Arctic Ocean 520 miles south of the Pole. On March 18, he headed north from Svartevoeg out across the Polar ice pack with 4 Eskimos and 4 sledges. On March 20, at a point just over 60 miles north of Cape Svartevoeg he sent back to land the supporting party of two Eskimos with two sledges and continued north for the Pole.

As he progressed over the drifting ice fields, hacking his way laboriously through pressure ridges and crossing leads of water covered by thin skins of young ice, Dr. Cook made three interesting and important discoveries: (1) on March 22, at a point 114 geographical miles north of Cape Svartevoeg, he reached the "Big Lead," the wide channel of water, sometimes frozen, sometimes open, which separates the land-adhering sea ice from the churning mass of the central pack, (2) On March 30 at 84 degrees 50 minutes North Latitude and 95 degrees 36 minutes West Longitude, he glimpsed a low, ice-sheeted island located apparently about 50 miles west of his line of march, which he named Bradley Land in honor of a benefactor who had borne a large part of the cost of the expedition, and (3) on April 12 and 13 at between 87 degrees and 88 degrees North Latitude and approximately 95 degrees West Longitude he traveled over an island of old glacial land ice drifting amidst the surrounding sea ice, hundreds of miles from land.

On his northward march across this unknown and uncharted region of the Arctic, Dr. Cook attempted to follow as nearly as possible the 97th Meridian West but found that an easterly drift which generally prevailed together with winds out of the west drove him constantly eastward, compelling him to set a course west of north in order to accomplish true northing.

By a display of the most remarkable daring, resourcefulness, and fortitude, Dr. Cook reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908, accompanied by his faithful Eskimo companions Etukishook and Ahwelah, and thereby became its discoverer. He established two camps during his stay at the Pole from Noon on April 21, 1908 until Midnight of April 22, 1908, took 7 sets of observations with the sextant to fix his position, and observed natural conditions at the top of the world: moving, ice-encrusted sea, no land, no life. By lowering a broken hand-axe tied to a life line into the sea and observing the angle the line made with its surface, he determined that there was a drift across the Pole from the Asiatic side toward Greenland. He also noted that the drift at the Pole and in its immediate vicinity was stronger than at two or three degrees South and that the pack was slightly more active.



MAP SHOWING DR. COOK'S ROUTE FROM ANNOATOK, GREENLAND TO THE NORTH POLE AND RETURN. FEBRUARY 19, 1908 - APRIL 15, 1909.

At Midnight of April 22, after 36 hours at his goal, Dr. Cook turned his back on the Pole and began the difficult, dangerous, and wearying journey south across the moving pack, his destination being Cape Svartevoeg, his point of departure. Because on his northward trek he had uniformly encountered an easterly drift, he decided to return southward as nearly as possible along the 100th Meridian West in order to compensate for this expected drift. As he had anticipated, the drift across his course was indeed easterly for a considerable distance and on May 24, his position was 84 degrees 02 minutes North Latitude and 97

degrees 03 minutes West Longitude. Shortly afterward, however, as he proceeded southwardly in dense fog over the rapidly disintegrating pack, he became caught unexpectedly in the grip of a southwesterly drift which carried him inexorably further and further away from his intended landfall at Cape Svartevoeg, and caused him to come ashore exhausted, half-starved and almost without provisions June 14, 1908 on a tiny island in Hassell Sound, many miles south and west of the caches of food which he had deposited near Cape Svartevoeg. The diversion from his intended route caused by this southwesterly drift resulted in a delay of many months in reaching his base at Annoatok and condemned Dr. Cook and his companions to a winter alone in the frigid Polar wilderness.

By an even more astonishing manifestation of the extraordinary qualities which had enabled him to reach his goal, he managed to survive the almost incredible rigors of this winter in the high Arctic and returned to civilization in 1909 to tell the world of his success. In accomplishing his ambition, Dr. Cook had made one of the longest sledge journeys in the history of Arctic exploration and triumphed over the cruel, elemental forces of nature in the Arctic. His courage, brilliance, and endurance form one of the finest and most inspiring chapters in the history of the human mind and spirit.

II

The first public announcement of his discovery of the North Pole was cabled by Dr. Cook to the New York Herald from Lerwick in the Shetland Islands on September 1, 1909 together with a skeletal account of the major events of the Polar campaign. This was published by the Herald on September 2, 1909. The entire civilized world had heard the news within 24 hours thereafter. On September 1, Dr. Cook also dispatched a cable to the International Bureau of Polar Research at the Royal Observatory, Brussels, Belgium, conveying news of his attainment of the Pole. A more extended report was serialized and published in the New York Herald in September and October 1909. The full and detailed narrative of his Arctic Expedition of 1907-1909 is set forth in his book, *My Attainment of the Pole*, which was published in 1911. The first description of natural conditions at the North Pole and of the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean north of 87 degrees 6 minutes north was given to the world by Dr. Cook in his initial cable of September 1, 1909.

Through all the years since his return from his last Arctic expedition, there has been a very substantial body of evidence which supports his claim to the discovery of the North Pole; during the last three to four decades the weight, extent and significance of the supporting data has grown steadily until the case for Dr. Cook's prior attainment is at the present time well-nigh incontrovertible. Of the older array of supporting evidence, known since the Autumn of 1909 and the years immediately thereafter, the most important pieces might be said to consist of the following:

1. Dr. Cook's extraordinary ability as a Polar explorer and his extensive experience in the conquest of Polar problems, attested by some of the most highly respected figures in the history of Polar exploration, most notably Roald Amundsen, who said of him that "... he was a genius in exploration" and that "... he was the finest traveler I ever saw."

- 2.(a) Knud Rasmussen's report after his interviews with the Cape York Eskimos in the Summer of 1909. Rasmussen, a Danish explorer and student of Eskimo life, customs and traditions, and himself partially of Eskimo ancestry, had a complete mastery of the Eskimo tongue, both the North and South Greenland dialects, and spoke it fluently. He accompanied a Danish government expedition to Northern Greenland in June and July of 1909 and exhaustively interrogated the Cape York Eskimos about Dr. Cook's 1908-1909 Arctic travels. He found that the Eskimos of the tribe to whom Cook's companions on the journey to the North Pole belonged entirely confirmed Cook's own account. Rasmussen's examination of the Eskimos took place in Northern Greenland, hundreds of miles from Cook, who was then in South Greenland awaiting a ship which would take him to Denmark. The Eskimos were thus not subject to influence or coercion of any kind from him at the time their testimony was elicited by Rasmussen. Their evidence was spontaneously given and was entirely supportive of Cook's own narrative of his expedition to the North Pole and the return to Annoatok. Nor were they subject to pressure from Peary, who had not yet returned South from Cape Sheridan. Rasmussen, in turn, informed Jens Dugaard-Jensen, Inspector of North Greenland, Captain Schoubye, captain of the Danish government vessel, "Godthaab", and other members of the Danish party who were present, of the Eskimo testimony.

Of course, the Eskimos could not verify Cook's sextant readings and navigational procedures, but they did testify that Cook marched west across Ellesmere Land, and went up Nansen Strait to Cape Svartevoeg (now Stallworthy); that he marched north across the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean from Cape Svartevoeg for weeks, so far that they feared they would never return to land and their homes; that he took observations with his sextant; that on a certain day, after observations had been taken, he exultantly told his two Eskimo companions that they had reached the "Big Nail"; and they gave the same harrowing account of the return from the Pole that Cook had weeks before independently given Rasmussen and others hundreds of miles away in South Greenland. All of this Eskimo testimony was straightforward and was given without coaching or influence from any quarter. Rasmussen regarded the Eskimo testimony advanced in the Summer of 1909 as strong confirmation of Cook, whose own narrative he had heard weeks before in South Greenland. Rasmussen put the Eskimo testimony in writing and it was published in The New York Times on October 20, 1909. It is also reprinted in full in Andrew A. Freeman's excellent biography, *The Case For Dr. Cook* (1961).

From Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands, Inspector General Daugaard-Jensen on September 1, 1909 sent the following official cable to the Danish government:

"Dr. Cook reached the North Pole April 21, 1908. Arrived May 1909 at Upernivik from Cape York.

The Cape Yorkers confirm to Knud Rasmussen the voyage of Cook."

(b) Another expedition was also in North Greenland in the Summer of 1909, the Stolberg-de Quervain Expedition of the Berlin Geographical Society. They also heard directly from the Eskimos of the Cape York area that Dr. Cook had reached the North Pole. Again, the Eskimos spontaneously talked with the explorers visiting among them. In telling the members of this Expedition of Dr. Cook's success, they were subject to no duress, coercion, or influence by Cook, as he had been in South Greenland for weeks, hundreds of miles distant, at the time the Stolberg-de Quervain expedition encountered the Cape Yorkers.

3. Photographs of Cape Svartevoeg, now Cape Stallworthy, taken by Dr. Cook in March 1908, on his way to the Pole, are displayed in his book, *My Attainment of the Pole*. The headland shown is unquestionably Svartevoeg and the sledges depicted are equally unquestionably Cook's own distinctive models.

4. The distances which Dr. Cook reported he covered, and the speeds which he attained, by dog sledge over the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean from Cape Svartevoeg to the North Pole and the return to land, while they reflect the skill of the sledgedrivers and their extraordinary endurance, are entirely possible and feasible. The average daily speed of his Polar party was 15 geographical miles; the greatest single day's travel was 29 miles, just after the beginning of the journey across the pack ice when the strength of the party was at its height. On certain days, the party was unable to march at all because of blizzards. The distances and the speeds attained by Cook are well within the limits which have been established by 2 generations of exploration over the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean.

In connection with Dr. Cook's sledging speeds over the Arctic pack ice, it is important to emphasize two points, the first having to do with the type of sledge used and the other pertaining to the size of the Polar party. Based upon his experience in northern Greenland in 1891-92 and his reading of the journeys of other explorers in the Arctic, Dr. Cook had early concluded that a sledge of a new design and different construction was necessary in order to attain the speeds that would be required to reach the North Pole and return over the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean during the relatively short Polar sledging season, which opened about 1 March and ended about the end of May; before March, the darkness is too nearly complete to permit travel over the pack ice of the sea while after approximately the end of May, the warmth of the advancing Summer causes the pack to melt and break up, thus destroying the traveling surface and consigning the traveler to the sea and almost certain death. He decided that a sledge for Polar pack ice travel should be strong and sturdy, but light and of a streamlined design. He and his brother, Theodore Cook, therefore, set about designing such a sledge. As early as the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897-1899, he built a prototype of the sledge eventually used on the North Pole Expedition and, with Amundsen, experimented with it over the Antarctic ice. Cook ultimately decided that the most efficient sledge for travel over the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean should be built of hickory wood, which was very strong but light in weight, the runners shod with iron, its lines simple and streamlined, and utilizing struts instead of massive, solid boards. This new type sledge was nevertheless quite capable of carrying the weight of necessary food supplies and equipment. These sledges — strong, durable, and light — enabled Dr. Cook to reach and maintain higher speeds than could be attained by the older, heavier sledges and were an essential element in his successful assault on the North Pole. Photographs depicting the sledges built by him and utilized for the march to the Pole and the return are displayed in *My Attainment of the Pole*.

The other point which should be brought out here was Dr. Cook's conviction that the actual march to the Pole over the pack ice should be made by as small a party as possible. In this way, the weight of provisions, supplies and equipment to be carried was kept to a minimum, the speed of the party increased, and the chances of success vastly improved. For this reason, his final Polar marches were made by a party consisting of himself and two Eskimos.

A portion of Dr. Cook's original Polar records were left by him in Northern Greenland with Harry Whitney with instructions to bring them back to the United States at the close of the summer of 1909 where they would be reunited with the remainder of his original records, which Dr. Cook kept in his possession and took with him to Southern Greenland and thence to Denmark. Peary refused to permit Whitney to bring that portion of Cook's records which had been left with him aboard his ship when it returned to the United States, and they were therefore deposited on the Greenland shore, subject to tides, ice, snow and Arctic gales. Subsequently, these records were either destroyed or otherwise rendered unavailable for scrutiny. Cook's attempt to secure the preservation of these records by leaving them in Whitney's care was thus unexpectedly rendered fruitless. He was therefore, unable to present a complete series of field calculations for position, although many of the most interesting of these were among the papers Cook took with him and were thus preserved, including calculations for position at the North Pole itself. His Polar diary, however, is complete with entries for each day north from Cape Svartevoeg to the Pole and return south to first sight of land on June 13, 1908, including the period at the Pole, with all observations for location on the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean as noted down at the time. His original Polar notebooks have been preserved and are substantially, if not entirely, complete.

This mass of evidence dating from Dr. Cook's return from his North Pole Expedition in the Autumn of 1909 and the years immediately following was sufficiently strong and persuasive to convince a number of eminent geographers, historians, and



ISLAND OF OLD, GLACIAL LAND ICE DISCOVERED AND TRAVERSED BY DR. COOK ON APRIL 12 AND 13, 1908, IN THE ARCTIC OCEAN BETWEEN 87° AND 88° NORTH LATITUDE, AND AT APPROXIMATELY 95° WEST LONGITUDE.

explorers to acknowledge him as the first man to attain that long-sought geographical prize:

(1) In September 1909, immediately after his return from the Polar conquest, the Rector of the University of Copenhagen and Professor Elis Stromgren, distinguished astronomer and member of the faculty of the University, closely and exhaustively questioned Dr. Cook about his Arctic journey, particularly with respect to his observations for determining his position on the ice pack of the Arctic Sea. The result of this searching inquiry was that the University, with the approval of King Frederick of Denmark, its President, awarded him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in recognition of his attainment of the North Pole. Shortly thereafter, he was presented with the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of Denmark in honor of his achievement. In 1911, the Yearbook of the Danish Encyclopedia, which was published under the aegis of the University, recognized him as the Discoverer of the North Pole, thus re-affirming the University's support of Dr. Cook's claim.

(2) In 1913, Otto Sverdrup, the distinguished Norwegian Arctic explorer, headed a list of fifty of the world's leading Arctic explorers and Polar authorities who acknowledged Dr. Cook as the Discoverer of the North Pole.

(3) Also in 1913, the respected geographer, Professor Boschin, President of the Geographical Institute of Berlin University, after a careful examination of the facts then known concerning the question of Polar priority, accepted Dr. Cook's claim to the first attainment of the North Pole.

(4) In 1914, the Austrian geographer, Dr. Mataschek, in an article in the geographical journal, *Deutsche Rundschau fur Geographie*, acknowledged Dr. Cook as the first man to reach the North Pole.

(5) The monumental study of Polar priority, *Has The North Pole Been Discovered?*, by Captain Thomas F. Hall, appeared in 1917. This book remains to the present day one of the most exhaustive and detailed analyses ever made of the claims of Dr. Frederick A. Cook and Admiral Robert E. Peary to the Discovery of the North Pole. Captain Hall concluded that Dr. Cook was the first man to attain the North Pole.

(6) In 1952, the German student of the history of Arctic exploration, Professor H. H. Houben, came to the same conclusion in his book, *The Call of the North*.

(7) One of the classic studies of Polar priority, *The Conquest of the North Pole*, by J. Gordon Hayes, Professor of Geography at Cambridge University, England, was published in 1934. Hayes dismissed, after careful scrutiny, the charges of fraud and deception hurled at Dr. Cook from the camp of a rival 25 years earlier. He concluded that there was not a shred of credible evidence of misrepresentation by Cook in his Polar claim. Pondering the evidence before him in 1934, he further concluded that Dr. Cook went very far north during his Arctic journey in 1908 and that it was possible, though perhaps not probable, that he reached the North Pole. The fact that at that time neither Bradley Land nor the glacial ice island which Dr. Cook had encountered had been shown to exist was the apparent foundation for Hayes' doubt that Cook had actually attained the

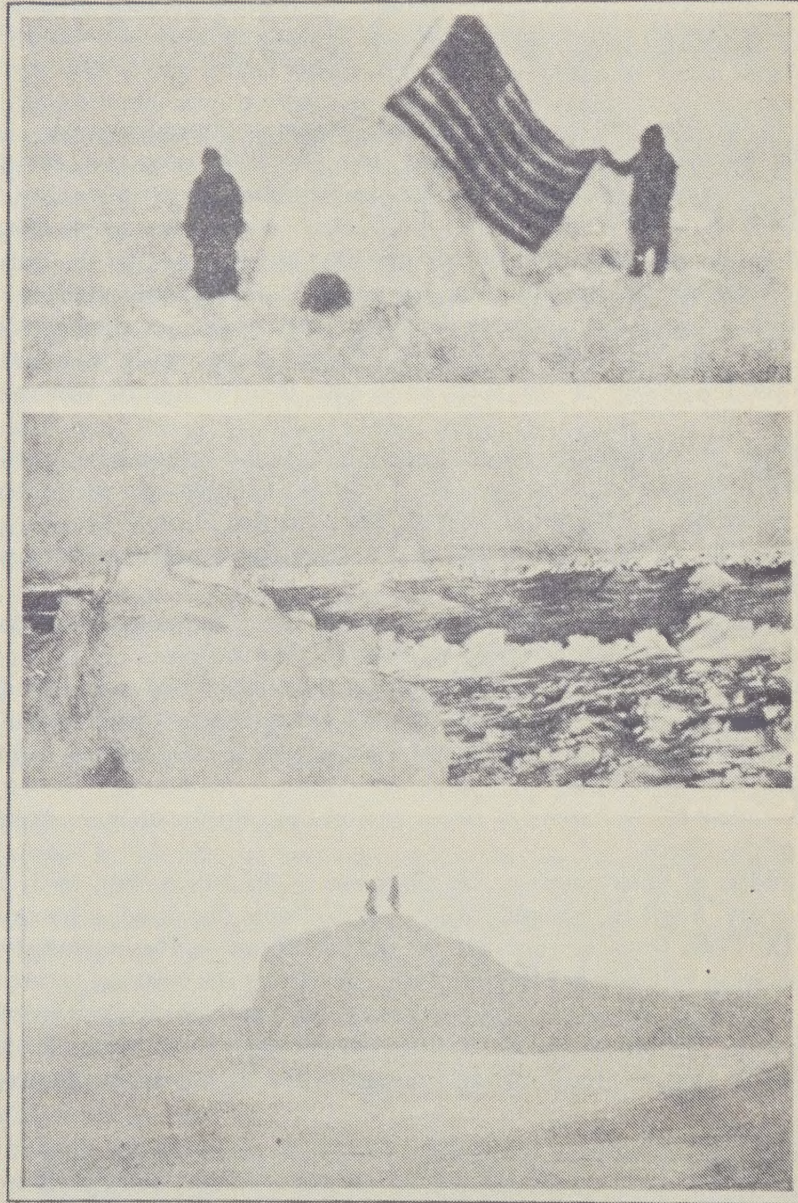


BRADLEY LAND DISCOVERED. SIGHTED BY DR. COOK IN THE ARCTIC OCEAN AT 84° 50' NORTH LATITUDE AND 95° 36' WEST LONGITUDE ON MARCH 30, 1908, ALMOST CERTAINLY A LARGE ICE ISLAND.

North Pole in 1908. With the rediscovery of the ice islands in the 1940's, years after Hayes' death, the reason for Hayes' doubt of the full extent of Cook's victory would seem to have vanished.

In an earlier book, *Robert Edwin Peary*, published in 1929, Hayes had urged that exploration be undertaken in the region of the Arctic through which Dr. Cook had traveled. He contended that if such exploration should prove the existence of the glacial ice island and Bradley Land, discovered by Cook, then the Cook controversy would be finished and Dr. Cook's claim verified. The conditions laid down by this distinguished geographer for the confirmation of Dr. Cook's claim to the Discovery of the North Pole have been substantially satisfied by the findings of modern exploration in the Arctic.

(8) The scholarly German atlas, *Stieler's*, one of the foremost and most highly respected geographic reference works in the world, after a thorough investigation of the available data, in 1925 extended recognition to Dr. Cook as the first man to reach the North Pole and recorded his name as its discoverer.



AT THE NORTH POLE—"WE WERE THE ONLY PULSATING CREATURES IN A DEAD WORLD OF ICE".

III

Over the last forty-five years, modern exploration of the Arctic Ocean and at the North Pole itself has provided a mass of data concerning natural phenomena in the higher reaches of the Arctic and with this data, has also furnished final confirmation of Dr. Cook's Discovery of the North Pole. Observations of natural conditions in the region of the Arctic through which he travelled, first among explorers, reported by him on his return from the Pole in 1909, have been verified again and again by modern explorers, geographers, oceanographers, glaciologists, and cartographers. For example:

- (1) Cook's first report of an island of old glacial land ice adrift in the Polar Sea hundreds of miles from land in the vicinity of the North Pole, surrounded by endless fields of sea ice. He traversed this island on April 12th and 13th of 1908 on his way north, and reported its location at between 87 and 88 degrees North, approximately 135 miles from the Pole. He photographed this glacial ice island and this photograph is displayed in his book, *My Attainment of the Pole*. Verified after World War II with the rediscovery of the ice islands. They have been studied extensively by glaciologists and entirely conform to Cook's description.
- (2) Cook's first report that at the North Pole there was only ice-encrusted sea in constant motion and upheaval. No land. Verified by all later explorers who have been there. He made a number of photographs at the Pole depicting the condition of the pack ice there. Several of these are displayed in his book *My Attainment of the Pole*. The conditions shown are thoroughly consistent with those found by modern exploration.
- (3) His first report of a current across the North Pole from the Asiatic side toward Greenland; his further very specific observation that this current was more strongly south and east at the Pole and in its immediate vicinity at the 97th Meridian West than it was at three degrees of latitude south of the Pole. Verified in modern times by exploration and oceanography. (It is true that Nansen had reported a trans-Polar drift as a result of the "Fram" Expedition, but this was a projection from his actual position nearest the Pole, more than 200 miles away. At the time Cook went North in 1907, it was not certain that islands might not exist at or very near the Pole which might deflect or divert currents which might otherwise be conjectured to cross the Pole).
- (4) His first report of a southwesterly drift in the Arctic Ocean beginning just south of the 84th parallel north and continuing for a considerable distance south, encountered when he was traveling close to the 100th Meridian west, returning from the Pole. Verified by modern exploration and oceanography. Now known as the southeastern segment of the clockwise-moving Western Arctic Gyral.
- (5) His report of an island in the Arctic Ocean at approximately 84 degrees-85 degrees North Latitude and at approximately 100 degrees West Longitude; an island he saw from a distance and described as low and ice-sheeted. He photographed it and the photograph is displayed in *My Attainment of the Pole*. He named it "Bradley Land." It is virtually certain today that Bradley Land existed and was a large ice island.

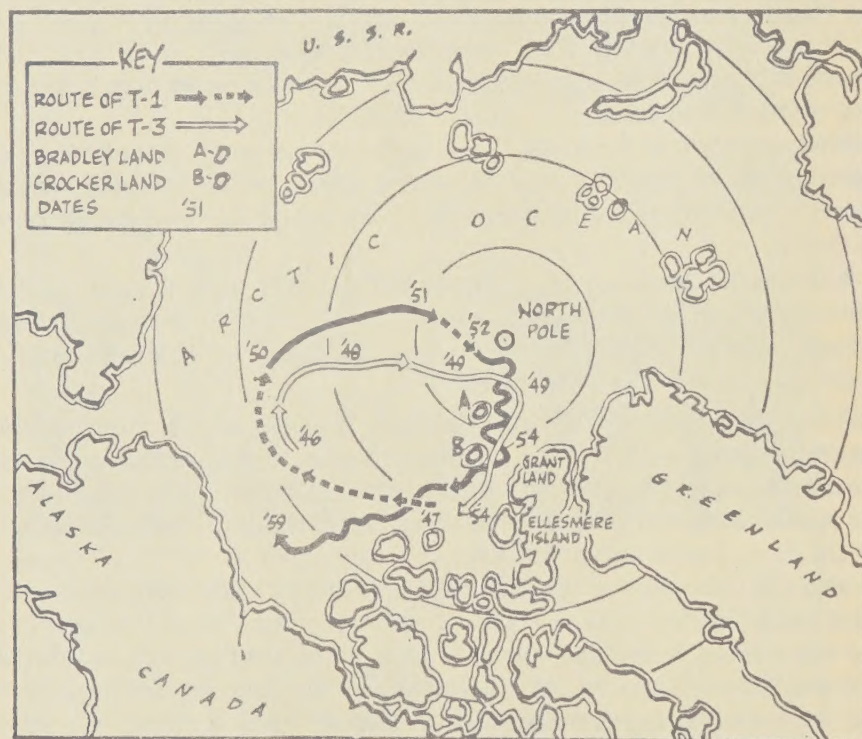
During the years immediately after the Second World War, several islands of old, glacial land ice were rediscovered in the Arctic Ocean by modern exploration. As a result of careful studies devoted to their origin and characteristics, it was determined that these ice islands are calved from the vast glaciers of Ellesmere Island, are deposited in the Arctic Ocean, and then drift about the Arctic, caught in prevailing currents, sometimes apparently for many years. The location assigned Bradley Land by Dr. Cook lies virtually within the drift pattern of the ice island known as T-1 during the years 1952-1959; this location also lies quite close to the drift pattern of the ice island designated as T-3 as plotted during the same period. As he did not touch Bradley Land at any point but merely saw it from a distance of several miles, it appears certain that, believing he was viewing an ordinary island of terra firma, the relatively undisturbed condition of the pack between his line of march and Bradley Land led him to assume that the island was further away than it actually was and thus to conclude that its mass was even greater than was in fact the case. A careful examination of an enlargement developed from the original negative of Dr. Cook's photograph of Bradley Land reveals that it was almost unquestionably an ice island, exactly like the one which he actually traversed, described, and photographed two weeks after he had sighted Bradley Land, but much larger and more massive.

- (6) His first report of the location of the "Big Lead" north of Cape Svartevoeg (Stallworthy). In *My Attainment of the Pole* he reported that the "Big Lead," the channel of water sometimes open, sometimes frozen, which separates the land-adhering sea ice from the central pack, was located approximately 114 miles north of Cape Svartevoeg. Modern exploration has revealed that the continental shelf drops off sharply at this point and the "Big Lead" is, in fact, located there.
- (7) His report of a complex pattern or series of prevailing currents in the Arctic Ocean north and northwest of the Canadian Archipelago, verified by modern exploration and oceanography. On his journey north across the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean from Cape Svartevoeg to the Pole, generally between the 94th and 97th Meridians West, he found the drift uniformly *easterly* except at and in the immediate vicinity of the Pole, where he found the current to be *southeasterly*; he constantly had to set a course West of North to achieve true northing. At the North Pole and in its immediate vicinity, he reported a prevailing current across the Pole from the Asiatic side toward Greenland; speaking non-technically, he found a *southeasterly* drift. Because of the *easterly* drift he had encountered while travelling north over the pack, he set his course south from the Pole along the 100th degree of Longitude West, hoping to counteract the effects of the *easterly*

drift. The drift across his course on the return, he reported, was indeed *easterly* until he reached the 84th degree of Latitude North when, suddenly and unexpectedly, he found that it became *southwesterly*. He did not escape the grip of this strong current for many, many days and its force caused him to be carried a great distance west and south of his intended landfall at Cape Svartevoeg, where a cache of provisions had been left, and to come ashore June 14, 1908 on a small island in Hassell Sound, exhausted and half starved. When he sighted land on June 13, 1908 at Latitude 79 degrees 2 minutes North and Longitude 101 degrees 22 minutes West, about 50 miles west of Axel Heiberg Land, he observed that the drift was *south-southeasterly*. His reports of these currents have all been corroborated in modern times. It seems certain that he must actually have been at the locations he specified in order to have known the nature and direction of the ocean currents of that region of the Arctic.

- (8) Cook's first report that above 87 degrees North Latitude the pack ice cover of the Arctic Ocean has fewer pressure ridges, hummocks, and leads than further south, and that the surface in general steadily becomes more regular and even as one proceeds North. Confirmed by modern exploration and glaciology.

Today, the evidence supporting Dr. Cook's Discovery of the North Pole is overwhelming. Historically, the clearest proof of a discoverer's claims has been the verification and corroboration by later explorers and geographers of his original description of the geographical area which he first saw and traversed. Surely it may fairly be said that this vast accumulation of supporting data has finally given us proof of his magnificent achievement. As Edwin Swift Balch, Captain Thomas F. Hall, and Professor J. Gordon Hayes prophesied would be the case so many years ago, modern exploration in the Arctic has provided the final, definitive answer. Frederick A. Cook's Discovery of the North Pole has been triumphantly confirmed. The evidence undergirding this conclusion is massive and there is no contradictory data.



DRIFTING ISLANDS OF GLACIAL ICE OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN, KNOWN AS "ICE ISLANDS", DISCOVERED BY MODERN EXPLORATION, HAVE PLAYED VITAL ROLE IN DR. COOK'S VINDICATION IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY. MAP SHOWS THE DRIFT OF TWO ICE ISLANDS AS PLOTTED DURING THE YEARS 1946-1954.

IV

The Frederick A. Cook Society, whose purpose is to gain wider recognition of the scientific and geographic accomplishments of Dr. Cook and to bring about a more general awareness of his Discovery of the North Pole, has been in existence in one form or another for many years. The Society had its origins in the Cook Arctic Club which was founded in 1939 by a group of Polar explorers and authorities on the history of Polar Exploration, including General David L. Brainard, of the Greely Expedition; Anthony Fiala, leader of the Fiala-Ziegler Polar Expedition; and Ralph Shainwald von Ahlefeldt of Dr. Cook's 1903 Mt. McKinley Expedition. Sir Hubert Wilkins, the distinguished Australian Polar explorer, was also instrumental in the establishment of the Club. Sir Hubert had discussions with Dr. Cook in 1939 and planned a submarine expedition to the North Pole in 1940. The coming of the Second World War aborted this expedition and during the War, the Club became dormant. After the War, as the evidence from geographers, glaciologists and oceanographers in the Arctic began to accumulate

supporting Dr. Cook's claim, his advocates gathered under the banner of The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society, an unincorporated association. Rear Admiral Charles W. Thomnas of the United States Coast Guard, a distinguished ice pilot and sailor of the Polar Seas, became first President of The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society. Admiral Thomas, who had vast knowledge of the Arctic and the Antarctic, and in particular of the ocean currents and ice conditions of the Arctic Ocean, was convinced that Dr. Cook had reached the North Pole in 1908, primarily on the basis of oceanographic congruities, the re-discovery of the ice islands, and the total consistency of Dr. Cook's account of his last Arctic Expedition, both internally and with a mass of natural phenomena discovered in modern times by other explorers and geographers in the area through which he travelled. During the years 1963-1969, Admiral Thomas was associated with the Geophysical Institute of the University of Hawaii, where he was engaged in oceanographic and Polar research. At the time of his death in 1973, Admiral Thomas was a member of the Board of Governors of The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society.

In 1976-77, The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society was incorporated under the laws of New York. Russell W. Gibbons, a leading authority on the life and explorations of Dr. Cook, became the first President of the incorporated body. Upon incorporation, The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society became The Frederick A. Cook Society because New York law forbade the use of the title "Dr." in a corporate name. The Society encourages scholarly research of the life and explorations of Dr. Cook and publishes articles, monographs, and studies concerning his achievements in the Arctic and the Antarctic.

In the last fifteen years, several excellent books have appeared written by careful students of the question of Polar priority. The authors of these volumes have had the distinct advantage of having before them not only the older corpus of evidence supporting Dr. Cook's claim but also the evidence which has more recently been brought to light by exploration in the Arctic. Three of these works have been highly favorable to Dr. Cook: *Winner Lose All*, by Hugh Eames (1973); *The Big Nail*, by Theon Wright (1970), and *The Polar Passion*, by Farley Mowat (1968). Both Eames and Mowat unequivocally acknowledge Dr. Cook as the Discoverer of the North Pole. Wright can be fairly said to conclude that the evidence strongly indicates that Dr. Cook was probably the first man to attain that point on the earth's surface. Thus, these works join the older studies supportive of Dr. Cook's claim by Frederick Pohl, the historian of exploration; Andrew Freeman, author of the first biography of Dr. Cook; Edwin Swift Balch, geographer and specialist in the history of Arctic and Antarctic exploration; and Captain Thomas F. Hall, inexhaustible and thoroughgoing analyst of Polar claims and ardent advocate of Dr. Cook.

In addition to these volumes, there have been a number of scholarly articles published in historical and geographical journals during the last 25 years which have been very favorable to Dr. Cook's claim. Among the most important of these is a monograph by Dr. Silvio Zavatti, Director of the Institute of Polar Geography in Civitanova Marche, Italy, and a distinguished Polar geographer and explorer, in which he acknowledges Dr. Cook as the Discoverer of the North Pole. This work, *Chi raggiunse per primo il Polo Nord? (Who First Reached the North Pole?)*, a study of Dr. Cook's last Arctic Expedition, was published by the Istituto Geografico Militare in November 1957. In a subsequent volume, *Dizionario degli Esploratori* published in 1967, Dr. Zavatti reaffirmed his recognition of Dr. Cook's conquest of the North Pole.

An excellent and concise presentation of the salient facts supporting Dr. Cook's claim to the Discovery of the North Pole written by John Euler, a student of the history of Arctic exploration, appeared in *Arctic*, the journal of the Arctic Institute of North America in December, 1964.

The distinguished Russian glaciologist and historian of Polar exploration, Vladislav S. Koryakin, member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., carefully and exhaustively studied Dr. Cook's observations of natural conditions in the Arctic Ocean north and northwest of the Canadian Archipelago and his description of the pack ice and the ocean current at the North Pole as set forth in his book *My Attainment of the Pole*, and compared them with his own intimate and extensive knowledge of these conditions gained from profound research over a period of almost 20 years. In a lengthy and detailed article in the Russian periodical, "Priroda", published in 1975, he sets forth his conclusion that data garnered by modern exploration in the Arctic, and scientific study of this data, has confirmed Dr. Cook's original observations and descriptions. Koryakin finds Cook's information concerning the area through which he traveled, unknown and unexplored when he made his historic journey, to be correct and extremely valuable. In particular, he refers to Dr. Cook's correct location of the "Big Lead" north of Axel Heiberg Island, his discovery of glacial land ice in the Arctic Ocean between the 87th and 88th degrees of Latitude North, his characterization of the pack ice above the 88th degree of Latitude as being more evenly surfaced than the ice further South, and his encounter with the great southwesterly drift in the Arctic Ocean northwest of the Queen Elizabeth Islands, then unknown but shown to exist in modern times.

The most accurate, thorough and complete documentary film portraying the history of Arctic exploration ever made, "The Arctic Adventure," was given its first showing at the Ontario Science Center in November, 1978. The producer of this film, Lyle Bebensee, a Canadian film maker who specializes in the making of documentaries, lavished great time and effort on this work. Philip C. Hudsmith, an English writer resident in Toronto, carried out the historical research and wrote the script for the film. Hudsmith carefully and painstakingly gathered all the evidence available on the question of the first attainment of the North Pole; he ferreted out original sources whenever possible, read Dr. Cook's books, *My Attainment of the Pole* and *Return From the Pole*, studied the works of numerous authorities on the history of Polar exploration, and surveyed the data pertaining to the Arctic Ocean and the North Pole brought to light by modern exploration together with comments from competent writers on the significance of this data. He came to the conclusion that the evidence is not merely strong and substantial



DR. FREDERICK A. COOK, c. 1936.

but overwhelming and leads almost inescapably to this fact: Dr. Frederick A. Cook reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908 and was thus its discoverer. The film, a panorama depicting 400 years of exploration, at its climactic moment acknowledges Dr. Cook's priority at the Pole and fully recognizes his pre-eminent place in the history of Polar exploration.

Edwin Swift Balch, the eminent American historical geographer, lawyer, Fellow of the American Geographical Society and member of the Royal Geographical Society of England, carefully gathered and exhaustively studied the evidence available in the period 1909-1913 on the question of Polar priority. He concluded in 1913 that Dr. Frederick A. Cook was the Discoverer of the North Pole. He emphasized that his conclusion was based upon the facts, not upon advertisements or propaganda. The noted Arctic authority, author of *The North Pole and Bradley Land*, stated most prophetically that a century after the publication of his own study historians and geographers will have examined all the evidence pertaining to the first attainment of the North Pole in a calm, objective, dispassionate and scholarly manner and he had no doubt that their conclusion would be the same as his. The record today indicates clearly that he was correct.

As the 75th Anniversary of Dr. Cook's Discovery of the North Pole approaches, one looks back and marvels at the incomparable vision, courage and resourcefulness and the heroic physical and spiritual stamina of this great man. These qualities, which he possessed in the highest degree, enabled him to overcome the awesome dangers and difficulties of the Arctic pack, complete his lonely and desperate journey to the North Pole, and return alive to give the world its first picture of conditions at the top of the globe. In the words of his fellow-explorer and peer, Roald Amundsen, he was indeed a genius in exploration. Frederick Albert Cook — explorer-discoverer, physician, ethnologist and mountain-climber — was truly a man for the ages.

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